

# The Ulster-American Folk Park

## HOW IT ALL BEGAN

by Eric Montgomery

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*(Cover photograph)*

*Mrs. Ruby Todd baking at the open hearth in the Mellon Cottage.*



# FOREWORD

The successful establishment and continued development of the Ulster-American Folk Park at Camphill, Co. Tyrone, has been one of Northern Ireland's success stories. That this has been achieved during a period of political and civil disturbance and unparalleled government economies makes it particularly remarkable and reflects great credit on all involved. But there are two people who have played outstanding roles, Dr. Matthew T. Mellon and Mr. Eric Montgomery. In the following pages Mr. Montgomery has recorded his own recollections of the development but has fortunately included some extensive quotations from Dr. Mellon's writings which makes the account doubly valuable.

The Ulster-American Folk Park has already become a major Education Centre and amenity facility in Northern Ireland and attracts well over fifty thousand visitors a year, many from outside the Province. In addition particularly through the project for a Museum of American Frontier Culture in the Appalachian region of the United States it is forming valuable international links not only in America but in Germany, with institutions which have similar interests.

Ever since its inception the Mellon House and subsequently the Ulster-American Folk Park have been fortunate in having attracted sympathetic support from successive Governments and their officials. Without this the venture could never have developed so successfully.

As Chairman of the Management Committee and of the Scotch-Irish Trustees, I would like on behalf of both bodies to thank all who have worked so hard to make the Folk Park such a success and to congratulate them on their achievement.

ALAN BURGESS

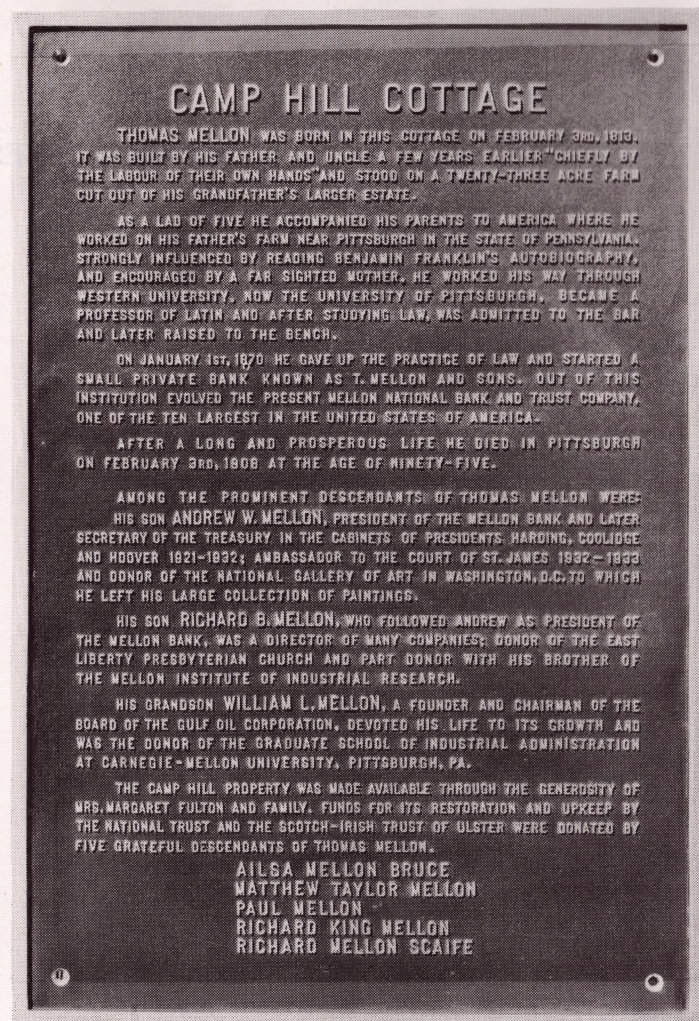


# How it all began

## by Eric Montgomery

I think it would be fair to say that for two people the Ulster-American Folk Park at Camphill near Omagh, County Tyrone, is a dream come true. For me it represents the culmination of an interest that started nearly forty years ago when during a memorable two year visit to America I first learned of the bonds of kinship between Ulster and the United States created by our emigrants during more than two centuries. Subsequent visits increased my interest but it was not until the 1950's that the opportunity came my way to approach the Government and obtain their support for the setting-up of the Ulster-Scot Historical Society (now the Ulster Historical Foundation) to carry out research over here into Ulster-American links and to help with genealogical inquiries.

In the 1960's I received the support of the Government and the active co-operation of the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and the Ulster-Scot Historical Society for a programme to restore the ancestral home of notable Americans whose forebears had emigrated from Ulster. One of the houses which, with the aid of the National Trust, we planned to restore under this programme was the little thatched farmhouse at Camphill, near Omagh, County Tyrone, birthplace of Judge Thomas Mellon the banking



The plaque at the entrance gate to the Mellon cottage commemorating its opening in 1968.

and industrial magnate of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, from which at the age of six he sailed to America with his parents in 1818.

It was through this project I came to meet the other person for whom the Ulster American Folk Park is also a vision fulfilled and whose enthusiasm and practical help more than that of any other individual made the fulfilment possible. My telephone rang one morning and a cultured American voice said: "You won't know me. My name is Matthew Mellon. My family heard you were restoring our ancestor's birthplace and I have come over to see how we can help."

Later that day I met Dr. Mellon at the Grand Central Hotel in Belfast and from that meeting a friendship and shared interest developed that was to lead to the restoration of the Mellon Farmstead and ultimately to the creation of the Ulster-American Folk Park to which Dr. Mellon's Foundation has contributed so generously.

I think the real reward for both of us is that we have been able to play a part in the creation of something that is proving, and will continue to prove down the years, of great educational and cultural value to young and old, something that demonstrates the heritage we all share with each other here and our unique relationship with America.

One thing that particularly appealed to Dr. Mellon was that, except for the complex modern Visitor Centre which his Foundation so generously financed, the whole Park has been laid out and all the other buildings constructed by men, many of them unskilled, recruited from the unemployment register in the Omagh area by Enterprise Ulster thereby providing much needed employment. It has also given me great satisfaction for, at the same time as I learned of Ulster's links with America during that now long distant visit to the United States, I also became acquainted with and formed a lasting admiration for the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps which President Roosevelt had created as an American employment scheme in the depression of the 1930's. When I was organising Ulster 71 the great Exposition staged on the Ormeau Embankment, Belfast, in 1971, I put forward as one aspect of the project a plan for a similar unemployment relief scheme here. It was adopted and following a successful pilot year was developed into Enterprise Ulster as we know it to-day and which has played such an important part in the building of the Folk Park.

It was through another American of Ulster descent that the Mellons first learned of the Camphill project. Word of the proposed restoration had reached Judge Elder Marshall, an eminent member of the legal fraternity in Pennsylvania whose ancestors hailed from County Down and who was a friend of the Mellon family. He got in touch with the family and asked if it would not be a good idea that they themselves should undertake the restoration of their ancestral home.

Let Dr. Matthew T. Mellon, the prime mover in winning his family's support for the suggestion, take up the story from here:-

*" 'Why not indeed,' was my first reaction. I had always had a soft spot in my heart for the old place and had felt admiration and gratitude to my great grand-father Judge Thomas Mellon for his wisdom and energy in working up the way he had from a*



situation of dire poverty. I realized that this was my chance to show my gratitude.

I had made my first pilgrimage to Camphill just after World War I. Returning to the old homestead with my wife in 1964 to see what could be done, we were shocked by the run-down condition of the cottage which had been turned into a store when the present owners of the farm had built a new dwelling house nearby.

What followed were two years of negotiations with the Northern Ireland Prime Minister, Captain Terence O'Neill, and his most understanding and helpful aide, Mr. Eric Montgomery. Then the great day dawned when I was asked to present a plan at a meeting of T. Mellon and Sons. Armed with arguments and pictures, cousins Dick and Paul began to take an interest. Before the meeting ended they had both agreed to contribute, as did Dick Scaife, who was cognisant of the interest his mother had taken in Camphill when she had visited it with his father not so long before. Cousin Ailsa later joined our group, so we five decided to go ahead.

Then followed over a year of negotiations with the Fulton family, the present owners of the farm whose co-operation and sage advice then and since have proved invaluable. An architect and contractor were our next problem but thanks to Mr. John Lewis-Crosby, the then Chief Officer of the National Trust in Northern Ireland, the right people were found and he personally supervised the work of restoration and furnishing. Worthwhile things are rarely as simple as they seem, so another year dragged on before the complete restoration became a possibility. It was then that the idea of a family gathering in Northern Ireland dawned on us. The Government asked me how many Mellons might come. Knowing our family, I replied 'possibly ten or twelve.' But I was wrong. Very much to my surprise about fifty Mellons showed up after I had written the following letter:-

'It will probably surprise you to learn that, with the consent of our family, I have undertaken to work with the Government of Northern Ireland to acquire, restore and maintain our ancestral home over there. I am writing to give you some idea of how things now stand and to invite you to attend the Opening Ceremony there next June.

It is a pleasure to report that, after two years, the job is ending satisfactorily. Five members of the Mellon Family have provided sufficient funds to the newly formed Scotch-Irish Trust to restore and maintain our property.

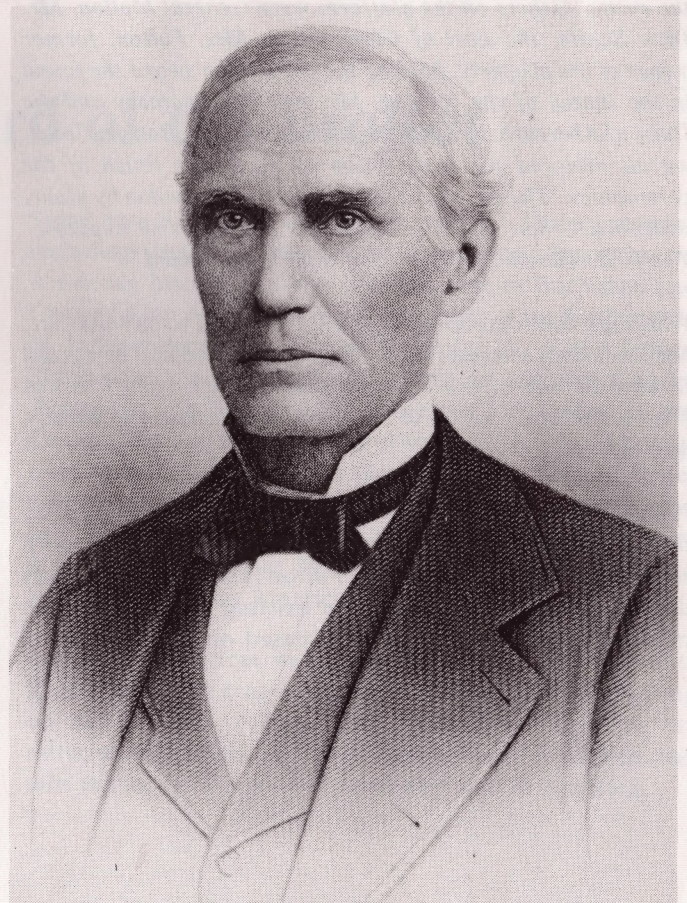
We are fortunate to have obtained the services of the same architect who did such a good job of restoring the Woodrow Wilson home nearby. Good progress is being made in cleaning up the old houses, thatching the roofs and procuring suitable furniture of the early nineteenth century as used at the time that the family last lived there just one hundred and fifty years ago. Everything possible has been done to preserve the beauty of the spot with its lovely view across the River Strule to the beautiful hills beyond. All the unsightly objects around the property have either been removed or planted out. A good deal of landscaping was necessary to accomplish this. The

cottage in which Judge Thomas Mellon was born, the barn, a 'threshing floor' and the 'turfhouse' are being put into shape and a path leading up to the summit of Camp Hill, several hundred feet from the homestead, will terminate at a large stone platform surmounted by a sundial. It was here that the defeated soldiers of James II camped after retreating from the guns of William of Orange at the siege of Londonderry in 1689. There is a particularly wide and beautiful view from this point which will be marked by a bronze tablet outlining its history.

We earnestly hope that the Opening Ceremony will bring many of us together who now live so far apart as to be practically strangers. Camp Hill should not be merely a place to renew acquaintances, but should give each of us a chance to honor a great ancestor, whose moving to America opened up so many rich opportunities for us all. I am convinced that our meeting there next June can be a very worthwhile and moving experience as well as an interesting and enjoyable one.'

Besides writing a suitable speech for the Opening Ceremony and presiding at the actual opening of the cottage door, my work was done. From then on my wife, Jane, took over with the preparations she and the Government had previously made and with the organisation of a welcoming dinner for all the family on the evening that most of them arrived. The event took on special meaning as it was the sixty-ninth birthday of my cousin General Richard K. Mellon.

The next evening we all went to the Government dinner at Parliament Buildings Stormont. Cousin Connie (Mrs. R.K.



Judge Thomas Mellon  
about 1870



*Mellon) and Jane had worked out the seating plan of the family - a terrific job. Then General Richard K. Mellon, seated between the Prime Minister and Mrs. O'Neill made a fine speech on behalf of the family. Later cousin Dick Scaife arose and added a few words of thanks. I was surprised when the Prime Minister presented me with a framed map of Ulster and also a bit 'choked up' with emotion when they all gave me a standing ovation. Afterwards we were shown through the two beautiful chambers of Stormont's House and Senate.*

*Next day started out warm and sunny. Upon arrival at Camp Hill for the Opening Ceremony we were met by the Prime Minister and Mrs. O'Neill who flew in by helicopter. After the cottage was opened, Captain O'Neill, the General and I entered it and took our places before the open peat fire, while the press bombarded us with questions and flash bulbs. They asked the General how he liked his ancestral home. "It's so nice I don't see why grandfather ever left it," he said amid laughter. When they asked me why we restored the homestead, I told them that, aside from the sentiment most of us have for the old place, I had always thought of it as a symbol around which the Mellon family could rally in the future - a proud reminder of our humble origins.*

*Then came the speeches in the big tent where several hundred guests - some of them distant relations - had assembled. Captain O'Neill said some very nice things about our family as the rain pattered on the tent roof. We all laughed when he said 'it was probably weather like this that drove the Mellons out of Ulster.' My speech followed in which I gave a scanty review of the Judge's life, together with a short description of his return to Camp Hill in 1882. Sir Francis Evans, Chairman of the Scotch-Irish Trust, delivered an eloquent address which ended the event. Others on the platform were General Mellon, Mr. Dick Scaife, the Earl of Clanwilliam, Mrs. Fulton, former owner of the property, holding the old Mellon sword she found in the thatch of the cottage, Mr. Eric Montgomery and the Duke of Abercorn, to whose beautiful residence, Barons Court, we all motored for a reception to mark the finish of the ceremonies. The next day many of us left for London by plane, while others motored over the border into the Irish Republic. The first reunion of the Mellon family had ended."*

Although the reunion had ended, I am glad to say that Dr. Mellon's own interest in the project continued and he agreed to become one of the Trustees of the Scotch-Irish Trust of Ulster, the body set up to restore and maintain the Mellon homestead.

A small adjoining farm was acquired by the Trust soon after the ceremonies described above by Dr. Mellon together with some additional land from the Fulton family and a plan was drawn up to use this and the existing property for an outdoor museum of emigration based on the description

given in Judge Mellon's autobiography of life at Camp Hill and in the New World. The autobiography was written by the Judge in the evening of his life and published privately in 1885 for members of his family. Through his account of his early life at Camp Hill and then in Westmoreland County in Pennsylvania he provided a uniquely detailed description of the life lived on both sides of the Atlantic by the Ulster emigrant of the 18th and early 19th centuries.

The proposal was that the area beside (and including) the Mellon farmstead should be laid out as the Old World area of the outdoor museum and the rest used to depict life in the New World. On the former would be built a replica of the Meeting House in which the young Thomas had worshipped and which is still in use as a Sunday School on its original site four miles from Camp Hill; the old schoolhouse which Thomas would have attended had he not emigrated to America (and which was in due course carefully dismantled and re-enacted at the Folk Park exactly as it had been on its original site); a forge and some other buildings.

The visitor would then enter the New World area where the story of Thomas Mellon's emigration would be continued through the construction of a full-scale replica of the first log cabin he had lived in and the later more elaborate log farmhouse, barn and other outbuildings which the family built. As well a replica of the outdoor pulpit he describes in his autobiography and which was typical of the period was to be erected and a Conestoga Wagon such as was hired to transport the family on the final lap of their journey over the Appalachians procured and put on view. Room was to be left for further buildings later, and as will be seen on page 18, one of the houses subsequently added was the boyhood home of Archbishop John Hughes who was born only a few miles from Camphill and who became the first Roman Catholic Archbishop of New York and builder of St. Patrick's Cathedral on that city's famous Fifth Avenue.

The plan won the support of Dr. Matthew T. Mellon who saw in it a project that could be of educational value to the young people of Northern Ireland as well as a symbol of the close links of the Province with America. It is indeed thanks chiefly to Dr. Mellon's personal interest and his very public spirited support that the Ulster-American Folk Park came into being. His Foundation (the Matthew T. Mellon Foundation) generously agreed to pay for a modern Visitor Centre and on this basis, and with the knowledge that Enterprise Ulster (see page 17) had agreed to construct the rest of the buildings, the Northern Ireland Government gave its approval for the project and agreed to meet the annual expenditure of the Folk Park. It should also be recorded that the Richard King Mellon Foundation too have generously given their support.





THE MELLON COTTAGE

## A Pictorial Record of the Project

In the pages that follow, the story of the opening of the restored Mellon farmstead and the development of the Ulster-American Folk Park are told in pictorial form. As will be seen in this pictorial section the Park has attracted many important visitors. It has also succeeded, beyond anything the planners dreamed possible, in attracting large numbers of students and of the general public.

Young and old alike have been able to relive the past in the park. This has been of special importance for the young as it has enabled them to learn how earlier generations lived here and in America by seeing or participating in old time crafts such as soap and candle making, baking, spinning, weaving, thatching, the work of the blacksmith etc.

For all, the Folk Park is a history lesson in practical form describing the close links formed through large-scale emigration, that bind us to our American cousins. It tells too the remarkable part played by emigrants from Ulster in the birth and growth of the United States.

Some ten American Presidents were of Ulster ancestry including the only three first generation Presidents in American history, Andrew Jackson, James Buchanan and Chester Alan Arthur. Several signatories of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution of the United States also claimed Ulster ancestry as too did Charles Thompson, Secretary of the Congress which adopted the Declaration and John Dunlap who printed it and who was born only a few miles from the Folk Park. Men of Ulster origin also made their mark in Clerical life including John McCloskey the first Roman Catholic Prelate in the United States and Francis Makemie founder of organised Presbyterianism in America.

But it was the great waves of ordinary humble emigrants from Ulster who created the most numerous links, fighting on the frontiers, toiling in the backwoods, building the railways and canals. The Folk Park honours all of them and tells the story of how they lived here and in America.



## Now and then

*It is a remarkable fact that not only does the cottage at Camphill, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, in which Judge Mellon was born, and which was built by his father and uncle, still stand but also the log house outside Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which the Judge, then in his teens, and his father built as their New World farm began to prosper. The log barn which they also built was pulled down in the 1930's but from the recollections of the family who now live in the dwelling house and from measurements of the foundations it has been possible to construct an exact replica (see page 11).*

*1. This early picture of Judge Mellon's boyhood home was taken by his son James when he visited Camphill with his wife in 1874.*

*2. The restored house as it appears to-day. A stone barn was added in the interval since the picture at 1 (above) was taken but otherwise there has been little change.*

*3. This picture taken sometime prior to 1893 shows the house a few miles outside Pittsburgh, that the Judge and his father built. The log walls were covered with weather boards in the 1850's and are still in sound condition after more than 150 years.*

*4. The replica of the above log house constructed at the Ulster-American Folk Park. It was built by the Enterprise Ulster workforce and has earned universal praise for its authenticity.*



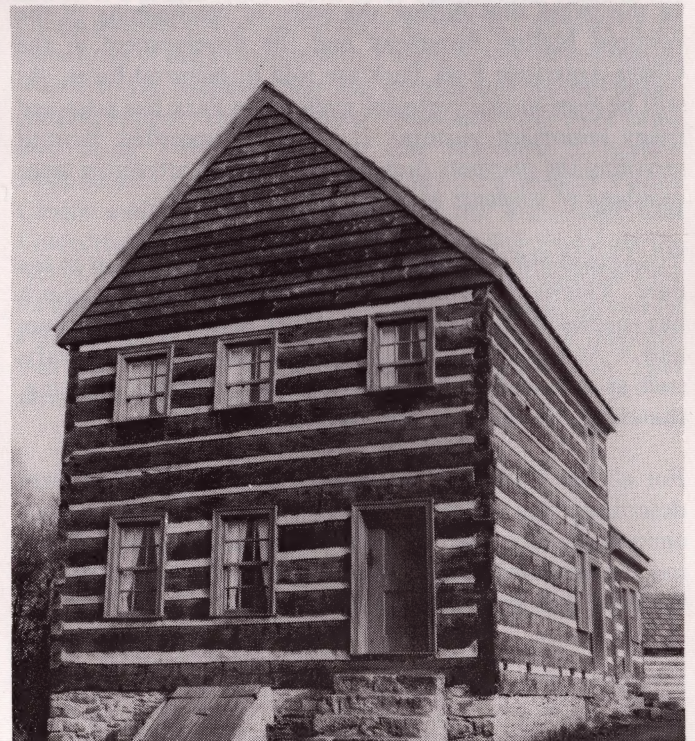
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## Mellon cottage opening

1. Lifting the Mount Stone into position on the Viewpoint.

2. (L to R) Mr. Eric Montgomery, Dr. Matthew T. Mellon, Mrs. Richard K. Mellon, General Richard K. Mellon, Mrs. O'Neill and Prime Minister Terence O'Neill arriving for the opening ceremony after the restoration of the Mellon cottage.

3. Mrs. Margaret Fulton, from whose family the Trust acquired the Mellon Farmstead for restoration, holding an old sword discovered in the thatch of the Cottage. In front (and looking slightly apprehensive!) is Mr. Richard M. Scaife.

4. Dr. Matthew T. Mellon performing the opening ceremony.



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5. Descendants of Judge Mellon and their families at the opening ceremony for the restored cottage on 21st June 1968.



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## The construction of the Folk Park



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1. Sir Francis Evans (in cab) Chairman of the Scotch-Irish Trust of Ulster, cutting the first "sod" at the Folk Park in 1974. Standing beside the digger is Mr. Patrick Shea, Chairman of Enterprise Ulster, the publicly funded employment organisation which constructed the Folk Park.

2. Men of Enterprise Ulster re-constructing one of the Old World buildings.

L to R: Mr. Andy Walker and Mr. Seamus Brannigan.

3. Mr. Andy Walker (Senior) and Mr. Martin Stankard thatching the roof of one of the Old World buildings.

4. Enterprise Ulster men putting the shingles on the log house in the New World area.

L to R: Mr. Joe McCallion and Mr. Eric Simmons.

5. Professor Henry Glassie of the University of Pennsylvania visited the Folk Park in 1975 to advise on the lay-out of the New World area of the Park. In this picture he is standing second from the left and is accompanied by:

L to R: Ken Parkin, Chief Forest Officer; George Thompson, Director, Ulster Folk and Transport Museum; Robert McKinsty, Architect of the Folk Park; and Robert Carson, Landscape Architect for the project.



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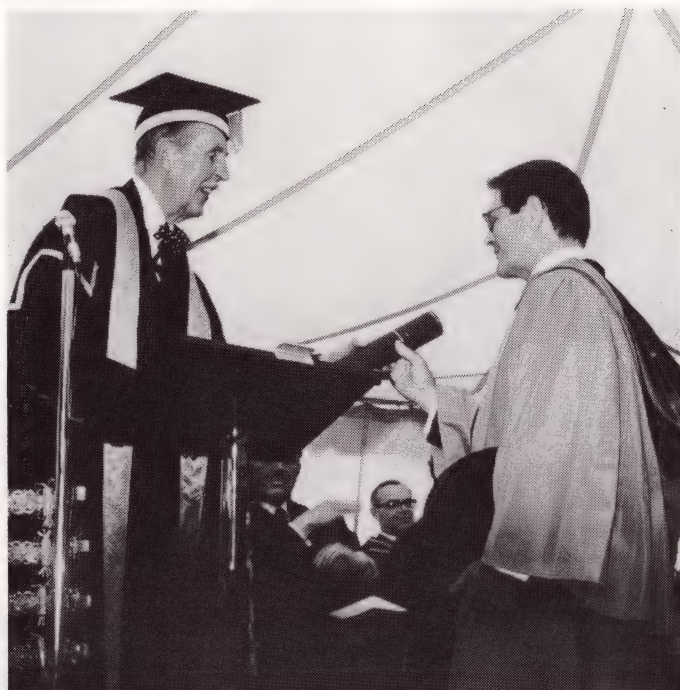
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## Stone-Laying Ceremony

1. *The Hon. Elliot Richardson, (at right of group) American Ambassador to the Court of St. James who performed the stone-laying ceremony at the Visitor Centre in 1975 is here pictured with (from left): the Rt. Hon. Merlyn Rees, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mrs. Richardson and Mrs. Rees.*

2. *The Duke of Abercorn, Chancellor of the New University of Ulster, conferring a Doctorate of Letters on Mr. Elliot Richardson in a special conferment at the Folk Park after the stone-laying ceremony.*

## Opening of the Folk Park and Hughes Cottage

3. *The Marquess of Lothian, Chairman of the British Bicentennial Liaison Committee unveiling a plaque when he declared open the Matthew T. Mellon Visitor Centre and the Folk Park.*

4. *Mrs. Merlyn Rees (left), wife of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with Mrs. Matthew T. Mellon at the Folk Park opening ceremony.*

5. *The Hon. Walter J.P. Curley, former American Ambassador to the Republic of Ireland, accompanied by Mrs. Curley, declaring the Hughes cottage open in June 1980.*

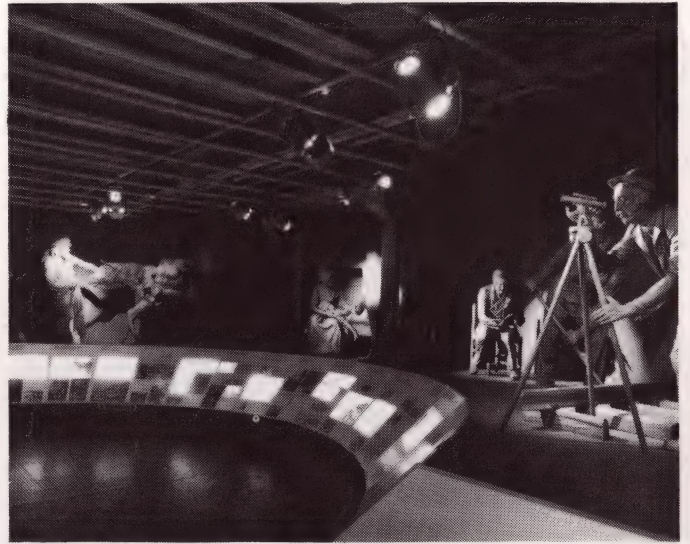


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# The Old World

## The Museum Buildings

1. The exterior of the Matthew T. Mellon Visitor Centre.

2. One of the galleries in the Visitor Centre.

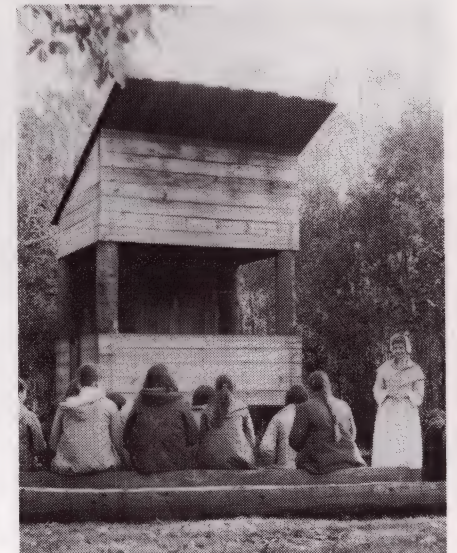
3. The cottage where spinning and weaving are demonstrated.

4. This is a reproduction of the first log cabin house in which Judge Mellon and his parents settled on arrival in Pennsylvania.

5. One of the costumed guides (Mrs. Olive Breslin) showing a party of school children the Camp Pulpit round which in pioneer days the settlers gathered on summer Sundays to hold religious services.

6. The Hughes cottage, boyhood home of Archbishop John Hughes.

7. The forge.



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## and the New

8. *The Cross-Roads Meeting-House. This is an exact replica of the building which still stands two miles away.*

9. *The 150 year-old school-house which was moved from its original site two miles away at Castletown.*

10. *The Conestoga Wagon pulled by teams of horses or sometimes oxen. Behind it is a reconstruction of the log barn which the Mellons built on their farm.*

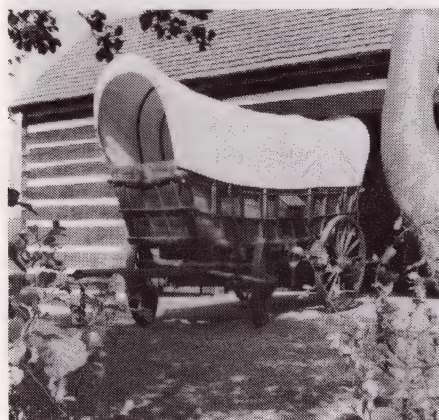
11. *The replica of the two storey hewn log house built by the Mellons a few years after they settled in Pennsylvania.*



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## Re-enacting the Past

*Craft demonstrators in period costume regularly demonstrate Ulster and American crafts and domestic skills to school visitors and the general public.*

1. *Blacksmith Gerry Taggart making a horseshoe in the Folk Park forge. As well as shoeing horses he and his assistant Eugene McDaid perform the other tasks of the country blacksmith such as making gates and fitting the iron shoes (i.e. rims) to cart wheels.*

2. *Mrs. Margaret Hutchinson demonstrating how to make a hay rope.*

3. *Mrs. Iris Fulton making corn meal muffins in the Log Cabin.*

4. *A group of primary school children "toeing the line" for Mrs. Elizabeth Campbell in the Folk Park's one hundred and fifty year old School House.*



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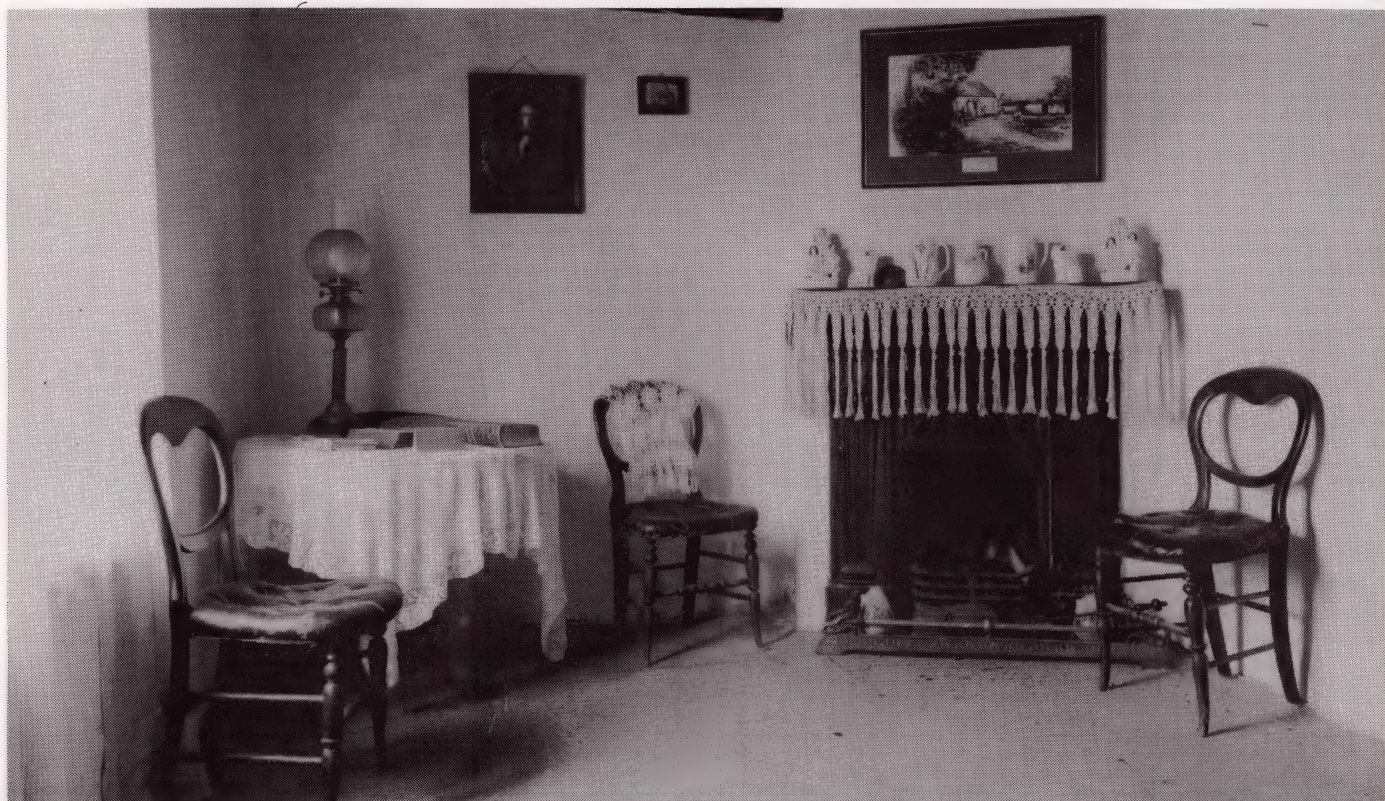
5. Mrs. Dorothy Fulton teaching the art of candle dipping to two visiting school children.

6. Mr. Jim O'Brien threshing with a flail.

7. The Folk Park weaver, Mrs. Eileen Pollock at work on her loom. The tweed she makes is sold in the Folk Park shop.

8. Mr. Jim Black splitting logs for snake fences in the field beside the log cabin.





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## Interiors of Museum Buildings

1. *Parlour of the Mellon Cottage*

2. *Pulpit in the Meeting House*

3. *Interior of Hughes House*

4. *Interior of Log Cabin*



## Distinguished visitors

1. American Ambassador Anne Armstrong visiting the Park in 1976.

2. The Hon. John J. Louis (left) US Ambassador talking to the Duke of Abercorn during a visit to the Folk Park in 1981.

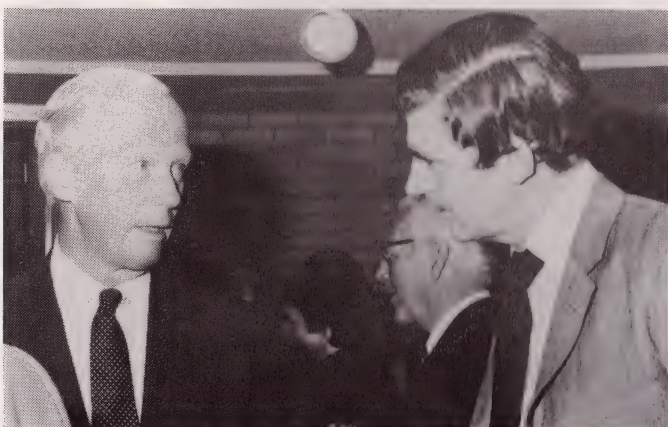
3. L. to R. The Chairman of Omagh District Council Mr. Patrick Bogan; the Lord Mayor of Belfast Mr. Billy Bell; and the

Chairman of the Folk Park, Dr. Alan Burges, try an old time method of transport in 1979.

4. L to R: The Rt. Hon. Roy Mason, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Hon. Lewis McMurrin, Legislative Advisor to the Governor of Virginia, the Hon. Kingman Brewster, US Ambassador, and Dr. Sherwood Mercer, President of the Scotch-Irish Society of the United States, during a visit to the Folk Park in September 1978.



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# The Layout of the Folk Park



## Key to the Buildings

- 1 Matthew T. Mellon Information Centre  
(Exhibition Galleries, Theatre, Shops and Toilets)
- 2 Forge
- 3 Weaver's Cottage
- 4 Meeting House
- 5 Mellon Homestead
- 6 Viewpoint
- 7 Hughes' House
- 8 Schoolhouse
- 9 Log Cabin
- 10 Conestoga Wagon
- 11 Pennsylvania Log Barn
- 12 Corn Crib
- 13 Smoke House
- 14 Spring House
- 15 Pennsylvania Log Farmhouse
- 16 Garden
- 17 Camp Meeting Site
- 18 Café, Toilets and Lecture Room



# The Development of the Folk Park

The outline plan of the Folk Park which was submitted to Dr. Mellon in the early 1970's and later to the Government, was committed to paper by Mr. Desmond Hodges, the architect who had also been involved in the restoration of the Mellon cottage and by Mr. Colin Latchem of Stranmillis Training College who also helped in the research into the Cross Roads Meeting House. Professional guidance on the Old World section was given by Mr. George Thompson, Director of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and on the New World lay-out by Professor Henry Glassie, Chairman of Folklore and Folklife, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Pennsylvania. Mr. Robert Oliver of New York and Mr. Eric de Jong of Harrisburg Pa. gave valuable assistance on artefacts and other aspects.

The first work had been undertaken by Enterprise Young Ulster, the forerunner of the present Enterprise Ulster organisation. When a little later the full Enterprise Ulster organisation was established, it took over the task of building the Folk Park and appointed the landscape architect Mr. Robert Carson (Mr. Hodges had meantime moved to Scotland) to undertake the detailed lay-out of the Park. Responsibility for the buildings, including the design of the modern Visitor Centre (the only building which was given out to contract as being too complex for Enterprise Ulster to tackle) fell to the architect Mr. Robert McKinstry who in drawing up plans visited America with the Director of Engineering of Enterprise Ulster, Mr. Harold Taggart. Mr. Patrick Shea, Chairman of Enterprise Ulster, personally chaired the Working Party which supervised the construction of the Park.

Of the many tasks Enterprise Ulster have undertaken, throughout Northern Ireland the Folk Park must surely rank as their most diversified and difficult for so much of the land was peat bog that many of the buildings had to be constructed on concrete platforms on hardcore fill bearing on the clay subsoil underlying the peat. Some of the paths too had to be laid on brushwood in the same manner as railway lines were laid over boggy ground.

In many ways the Enterprise Ulster men were re-enacting the role of early emigrants in the way they erected or re-erected Old and New World buildings of stone and logs and roofed them with thatch or shingles. Their work has earned glowing tributes from experts and the public alike.

The target set for Enterprise Ulster was to complete the Folk Park in time for an opening ceremony to coincide with the Bicentennial of the American Revolution in July 1976. Thanks to the efforts of the Working Party and of Mr. John Bovaird and his Enterprise Ulster site team this was achieved and the Folk Park declared open on schedule on 6th July 1976 by the Marquess of Lothian, chairman of the British Bicentennial Liaison Committee, in the presence of Dr. Matthew T. Mellon and other distinguished guests.

The New University of Ulster, which has close links with the Folk Park, marked the occasion by conferring a Doctorate

of Letters on Dr. Matthew T. Mellon. In 1975 they had similarly honoured the Hon. Elliot Richardson, American Ambassador to the Court of St. James when he had visited Camp Hill to lay the foundation stone for the Visitor Centre. For his services to Northern Ireland over the previous decade the Queen in 1979 conferred on Dr. Mellon the award of Commander of the Order of the British Empire. In the same year the Chairman of the Folk Park Dr. Burges was similarly honoured for his many services to the Province.

In the interval, the National Trust had indicated that they could not accept responsibility for the new enlarged undertaking and asked that whatever body took over this responsibility should also assume the care of the Mellon ancestral homestead which would obviously have to be the focal point of the enlarged Park. The Government, therefore, asked the Scotch-Irish Trust which was already in effect the landlord of the property to accept responsibility for managing the Park. Though it meant accepting much greater responsibility than heretofore the Trust readily agreed to do so working through a Management Committee.

The sponsoring Departments of Stormont (i.e. the bodies responsible for approving the Park's budget) were during the first five years the Central Secretariat and the Department of the Civil Service. This had been for reasons of administrative convenience at the time of the setting up of the Park. In 1981 it was considered that the Park was advanced enough to take its place with other major museums in the Province and accordingly financial responsibility or "sponsorship" was transferred to the Department of Education which bears responsibility for the other centrally funded museums and cultural organisations in Northern Ireland.

In 1976 when they first accepted responsibility for the Folk Park, the Scotch-Irish Trust approached the Northern Ireland Forest Service which agreed to manage the Park on an agency basis under the guidance of the Management Committee and with the Secretary of the Trust filling the role of Chief Executive. The Chief Forest Officer, Mr. Ken Parkin, arranged for Mr. Jim Scott, Head Forester in charge of the nearby Gortin Forest Park to divide his time between managing the Forest and Folk Parks with a small separate staff located at the Folk Park under Forest Ranger Patrick McHugh.

The advantage of this arrangement, in a situation where no one could foretell what the public response to the Park would be, was that the Forest Service could enlarge or reduce their seconded staff as circumstances required. In the event it was found that there was far greater public interest than anticipated and very soon the management of the two Parks had to be separated and Mr. Jack Devenney seconded by the Forest Service as Manager of the Folk Park.

At the end of two years it was mutually agreed that the Folk Park had gained enough experience to enable the Management Committee to appoint its own staff and take over control from the Northern Ireland Forest Service. This was done in 1978, the senior appointments under the Chief Executive (Administrative, Curatorial and Education Officers) being selected with the assistance of the Civil



Service Commission. It should be added that as well as the highly successful way in which they managed the Park in the difficult initial period the Forest Service have continued to help with advice and guidance.

Also it must be recorded that during the first two years of the Folk Park's existence the Western Education and Library Board seconded an Education Officer to the Park and gave invaluable help with the education programme. Following an inspection by the Department of Education the Folk Park was given an extra financial allocation which enabled them to pay for this appointment themselves and also to appoint an Assistant Education Officer.

In 1979 the Western Board very kindly undertook to help with the creation of a library at the Park and their support and advice have been of tremendous assistance in establishing this specialist facility to aid the research and education work of the Folk Park staff.

The other body which has been consistently helpful is Omagh District Council which reimburses the salary of the Curatorial Officer. Should the District Council decide in the future to provide a district museum for the area it is hoped that the Folk Park with its museum skills will be able to co-operate.

After the opening of the Folk Park in 1976 and while all that is described above was happening Enterprise Ulster had embarked on the second phase of their programme at the Park. This included the erection of prefabricated buildings to provide temporary office, library, lecture and storage accommodation; constructing the car park and entrance gates; making extra paths; building a lean-to addition to the forge; completing the Churchyard and Vestry at the Meeting House; building vehicle and tool sheds; reconstructing the Archbishop Hughes cottage (see below); erecting split log fencing and generally finishing out those aspects of the Park that could not be completed in time for the opening.

Meantime, too, valuable assistance was being received from the Youth Opportunities Programme, a Government youth employment agency.

In 1978/9 a Feasibility Study was commissioned by Enterprise Ulster to enable them to plan future work at the Folk Park. The study was carried out by the planning Consultants, Messrs Ferguson and McIlveen, under the guidance of the Chief Executive of the Folk Park and the Director of Engineering at Enterprise Ulster. It outlined a five-to-ten year development programme including an Old World village of thatched buildings representing life in a small Ulster town in the last century and a New World township of log buildings such as the young Thomas Mellon would have known. A link building between the Old and New World section of the Folk Park is also proposed. It will house an exhibition depicting the perils and hardships faced by 18th and 19th century emigrants on their voyages across the Atlantic. Finally, the study makes provision for permanent office, storage etc. accommodation, enlarged car parks, picnic facilities and a new sewage plant.

Meantime the Management Committee had been studying how best to strengthen the representation at the Folk Park

of the great nineteenth century wave of emigration which reached its peak in the famine years.

The Mellons represented the tail-end of the eighteenth century Scotch-Irish emigration from Ulster and although both 18th and 19th century emigrations are dealt with in the exhibition and audio-visual theatre in the Matthew T. Mellon Visitor Centre the Trustees felt that a building specifically relating to the 19th century emigration should be erected in the Park. By good fortune an ideal building for the purpose was discovered nearby. This was the little farmhouse which for part of each year was the home of the young John Hughes, later to become first Catholic Archbishop of New York and founder of the famous St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue.

Although the Hughes' home farm where John was born (the house had long since been pulled down) was at Augher, County Tyrone, the roofless walls of the other farmhouse were still standing just across the border in County Monaghan, now part of the Republic of Ireland. With the goodwill and assistance of the Department of Fisheries and Forestry in Dublin it was taken down and transported to the Folk Park in 1979.

Just as Thomas Mellon represented the 18th and early 19th century Scotch-Irish emigration, John Hughes portrayed par excellence the later 19th and early twentieth century emigration of the Irish-Americans. Indeed much of his life as Bishop and later Archbishop of New York was devoted to looking after the great wave of Irish emigrants that passed the famous Statue of Liberty to land in New York during the 19th century famine years in Ireland.

The highlight of 1980 was the completion and opening of the gallery extension to the Matthew T. Mellon Visitor Centre (towards which a substantial further grant was made by Dr. Mellon's Foundation) and the opening of the re-erected boyhood home of Archbishop John Hughes. Both buildings were opened on 26th June by the Hon. Walter J.P. Curley of New York, the distinguished former United States Ambassador to the Republic of Ireland whose wife is a niece of Dr. Matthew T. Mellon.

The extension to the Visitor Centre provided two much needed multi-purpose galleries which quickly proved their worth as venues for concerts, lectures and exhibitions.

Dr. Matthew T. Mellon attended the opening of the two buildings and for all present it was a deeply impressive occasion to hear him recall how as a small boy in the early years of this century he used to visit his great-grandfather Judge Thomas Mellon at his home in Pittsburgh and listen to the old man recount tales of his childhood at Camphill and of the hardships of the three month voyage he made across the Atlantic in 1818. When the exhibition depicting the hardships of the Atlantic crossing is constructed in the link building between Old and New World sections of the Park (see page 16) it is hoped to recreate the interior of the ship as recalled by Dr. Mellon from his great-grandfather's description.

It will be appropriate here to list the steady increase in the number of visitors to the Park that the above developments



coupled with the education programme and the emphasis on TV and press publicity have produced. These figures are set out below and it is interesting to note that despite the short lifespan of the Park it is recorded by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board as number six in their list of the Province's main attractions.

1976*	1977	1978	1979	1980
35,718	46,081	48,314	54,709	56,834

\*Part year

The success of the Park owes much to the personal interest and work of the staff under the supervision of the Management Committee. The Park is also fortunate to have been able to recruit some thirty part-time assistants who act as guides and who are called on as required. Their enthusiasm for explaining and demonstrating crafts and their knowledge of the history of the Folk Park has been one of the major factors in bringing visitors back on repeated return visits.

As an added visitor attraction the Folk Park shop was started (in a voluntary capacity) by Mrs. Joan Montgomery who continues to supervise the buying for it. The aim has been to keep it a quality craft shop with the primary emphasis on craft items made in Northern Ireland. The shop sells such Park made products as tweed and ironwork.

There is also a successful cafe at the Park, a very important service in view of the distance to the nearest town.

The aim of the Folk Park is to develop as a Museum of Emigration looking at all aspects of emigrant life on both sides of the Atlantic through the material side as portrayed by buildings, artefacts, documents, exhibitions etc; and the academic side i.e. historical research.

The current development programme on the material side is centred on reconstructing the paths, fields and paddocks in the New World section to give the area much more the appearance of a working farm. It is the aim of the Management Committee ultimately to develop the farming aspect of the Old and New World areas and this will in due course add greatly both to the educational and visitor amenity aspect of the Park. The aim is then as circumstances permit to proceed with the developments outlined in the Feasibility Study (page 18).

On the academic side (i.e. research and education) it is important to emphasise that the purpose of the Park is not to get more deeply involved in the Old World folk aspect than is necessary to the study and portrayal of emigration to North America. Rather it is to concentrate on the study and portrayal (through demonstrations, exhibitions, lectures and publications) of emigration and its causes and of the life of the emigrant in the New World. Thus whereas the Curatorial staff require a working knowledge of early Ulster buildings, artefacts and customs in order to portray these satisfactorily in the Old World section, and the Education staff similarly in connection with schools programmes, their

main field of study and research will obviously be the New World.

Since its inception, the Ulster-American Folk Park has established itself as a major educational resource working closely with the Universities and in particular the New University of Ulster. It makes special provision for the needs of teachers and students in all types of schools and provides a valuable service for youth and adult organisations and members of the public. The numbers of organised school and youth groups continues to grow and a total of 14,180 children on organised educational visits was recorded for 1980.

The normal three hour school visit consists of a short introductory talk, a thirty-minute film presentation and a guided tour of the buildings, but in recent years a number of highly successful craft months have been organised using the Guides in period costume to demonstrate crafts and skills of both Ulster and American origin. The crafts have provided a unique opportunity to study a wide variety of rural activities such as thatching, spinning and weaving, flailing, candle-making, log splitting, pioneer cooking and snake fencing. The school visitors are encouraged to participate in many of these activities and to make in-depth studies of these and other related topics on their return to school.

A new, specially equipped, project room is available at the Park, where children may attend talks, lectures and films on a variety of topics such as emigration, agriculture, emigrant shipping and log housing; handle objects from the museum collection and prepare and display project material. The Folk Park also provides a varied adult education programme with evening lectures and craft classes. The recently formed Omagh and District Historical Society meets twice monthly at the Park. Both the Curatorial and Education staff take part in the New University of Ulster and the Queen's University Extramural courses.

### The American Connection

Throughout all the activities described above, special emphasis has been placed on the "American Connection" which led to the creation of the Folk Park in the first place. The latter (the opening of which was timed appropriately for July 1976) was in fact the largest contribution in Europe to the commemoration of the Bicentennial of the American Revolution. The Chairman of the Folk Park, Dr. Alan Burges was Chairman of the Northern Ireland Bicentennial Committee and one of the Management Committee members Mr. Michael Murphy, Chief Executive of the Western Education and Library Board, was also a member of the Bicentennial Committee. The Chief Executive of the Folk Park was Secretary of the Bicentennial Committee. Since the Foundation Stone of the Matthew T. Mellon Visitor Centre at the Folk Park was laid by the then US Ambassador to the Court of St. James, each of his distinguished successors has visited the Park.

Since then too the deep involvement of the Folk Park with Ulster-American matters has meant that other organisations often look to it for support and advice. Encouragement was given to Carrickfergus and Ballymoney Borough Councils and Dungannon District Council, in



conjunction with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board,\* to consider the possibility of creating respectively a Jackson Museum in the old thatched farmhouse at Boneybefore, the restoration of the President McKinley ancestral home at Conagher and the President Ulysses Simpson Grant maternal ancestral home at Dergina. As well the Folk Park has, under the sponsorship of the Department of Finance, taken over responsibility for the President Wilson ancestral home at Dergalt from the National Trust which still administers the Gray Printing Shop at Strabane (associated with President Wilson and John Dunlap). The President Arthur ancestral home at Dreen is currently administered by Works Division of the Department of Finance.

The Ulster Historical Foundation which is housed in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, 66 Balmoral Avenue, Belfast 9, and which is guided by the Director of the latter, Mr. Brian Trainor, has also given a notable lead in these activities by the research it has sponsored and by its action in marking with plaques the places associated with the ancestors of many other notable Americans, including General James Shields from County Tyrone, Stonewall Jackson at the Birches, County Armagh and Charles Thompson at Maghera, County Londonderry. The Foundation also carries out genealogical research for

families of Ulster origin and has an active programme of publications.

Far and away the Folk Park's biggest American involvement is in relation to the proposal for a Museum of American Frontier Culture in Virginia, USA which will be on the same lines as the Folk Park whence the idea came. The aim of the Museum will be to show how eighteenth century frontier life began to bring about the intermingling which the American historian Frederick Jackson Turner in his famous Chicago lecture of 1893 described as "the formation of a composite nationality for the American people."

The end of the first five years is perhaps a suitable time to pause and assess progress to date. By any standards it has been a remarkable achievement to build and launch the Ulster-American Folk Park in so short a span of time. Despite the fact that it is as yet only half way to its ultimate target, its popularity with the public and with educational organisations presages a bright future. If that future promise matches past achievements, the continuing growth and success of this major project is assured and its educational and cultural contribution to Northern Ireland will be great indeed.

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\*The Northern Ireland Tourist Board have now produced a film "From Here to the White House" describing Ulster's many links with America.



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